

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR XF TC US

SUBJECT: STATUS OF ARAB-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS

REF: ABU DHABI 1082

1. FOLLOWING IS PROVIDED FOR YOUR OWN BACKGROUND ON THE STATUS OF U.S. EFFORTS TO RENEW MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS.

2. WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF CARRYING OUT A SERIES OF CONSULTATIONS WITH THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED AND ISRAEL TO SEE IF A NEGOTIATING PROCESS CAN BE LAUNCHED ON THE BASIS OF THE FEBRUARY 22 ISRAELI END-OF-WAR FORMULA WHICH ISRAEL PUT FORWARD AT OUR URGING. THE LEBANESE CRISIS BECAME SO ACUTE IN LATE MARCH, HOWEVER, THAT IT HAS ALMOST TOTALLY PREOCCUPIED THE SYRIANS IN PARTICULAR, TO THE EXCLUSION OF THESE BROADER QUESTIONS, AND OUR CONSULTATIONS ARE PER-FORCE IN SUSPENSE FOR THE TIME BEING. WE WILL PICK THEM UP AGAIN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

3. THE ARAB PUBLIC REACTION SO FAR TO THE FEBRUARY 22

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FORMULA HAS BEEN ONE OF SKEPTICISM OVER THE LIKELIHOOD THAT

ISRAEL HAS IN MIND SURRENDERING MORE THAN COSMETIC SLIVERS OF TERRITORY UNDER THE PROPOSED NEW ARRANGEMENT. WE BELIEVE THAT THE ISRAELI LEADERSHIP DOES RECOGNIZE THAT A

SUBSTANTIAL TERRITORIAL SHIFT WILL BE REQUIRED IF THE MAJOR ARAB CONCESSIONS ISRAEL WANTS ARE TO BE ACHIEVED, AND IT THEREFORE MAY PROVE POSSIBLE FOR THE UNITED STATES TO AROUSE SUFFICIENT ARAB INTEREST IN THE PROPOSAL TO GET A SERIES OF EXCHANGES UNDER WAY. WE HOPE THE ARABS CAN OVERCOME THEIR SUSPICIONS THAT THIS FORMULA IS ONLY A STALLING TACTIC AND CAN BE PERSUADED THAT AN ARAB FAILURE TO RESPOND POSITIVELY WILL BE INTERPRETED AS MEANING THAT ISRAEL HAS BEEN FORTHCOMING AND THE ARABS HAVE REACTED NEGATIVELY.

4. ONE OF THE MERITS WE SEE IN THE FEBRUARY 22 FORMULA IS THAT END-OF-WAR NEGOTIATIONS COULD GRADUALLY BE CONVERTED INTO THE NEGOTIATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. IF ISRAEL AND THE ARABS CAN BE BROUGHT TO REACH AGREEMENT ON MAJOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWALS IN RETURN FOR MAJOR ARAB STEPS TO END THE STATE OF WAR, THEY WILL BY THEN BE MOST OF THE WAY DOWN THE PATH TOWARD A FINAL SETTLEMENT AND MAY WELL MUSTER THE COURAGE TO GO THE LAST MILE.

5. ANOTHER ADVANTAGE OF GETTING A NEGOTIATING PROCESS GOING ON THE BASIS OF THE FEBRUARY 22 FORMULA IS THAT IT WILL INTENSIFY THE DEBATE GOING ON IN ISRAEL OVER BASIC ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUES AND COULD HELP LEAD TO A CLARIFICATION OF ISRAELI POSITIONS. SUCH NEGOTIATIONS MIGHT BRING ABOUT AN EARLY NATIONAL ELECTION IN ISRAEL, PERHAPS EVEN IN 1976, BECAUSE OF RABIN'S COMMITMENT TO HOLD AN ELECTION BEFORE COMMITTING ISRAEL TO WEST BANK WITHDRAWALS. MANY IN ISRAEL FEEL THAT THIS UNDERTAKING BY RABIN REALLY MEANS HE MUST GO TO THE POLLS BEFORE ENTERING INTO NEGOTIATIONS CONCERNING THE WEST BANK, ALTHOUGH RABIN HIMSELF HAS MAINTAINED THAT THIS IS NOT NECESSARY.

6. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE RABIN GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO SHOW A CERTAIN IMMOBILITY ON THE MIDDLE EAST PEACEMAKING FRONT. THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PRESSURES ON IT FROM WITHIN AND
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OUTSIDE ISRAEL CONTRIBUTE TO THIS. IT IS WORTH NOTING, HOWEVER, THAT THE FEBRUARY 22 CABINET DECISION AUTHORIZING RABIN TO PURSUE END-OF-WAR AGREEMENTS THROUGH THE UNITED STATES WITH EGYPT, SYRIA, AND JORDAN TOUCHED OFF A NEW ROUND IN THE DOVE-HAWK DEBATE IN THE LABOR PARTY AND IN ISRAEL AS A WHOLE THAT HAS BEEN GOING ON INTERMITTENTLY SINCE MAY 1975. THIS DEBATE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CONTINUE ONCE THE DISTRACTION OF THE LEBANESE CRISIS HAS SUBSIDED.

7. THE LINES ARE BEGINNING TO BE DRAWN IN ISRAEL OVER SUCH ISSUES AS THE GOVERNMENT'S DILEMMA CONCERNING UN-AUTHORIZED ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS ON THE WEST BANK, WHICH HAS LED SOME POLITICAL PARTIES TO THREATEN TO LEAVE THE RULING

COALITION. THE ELECTION VICTORY OF PALESTINIAN NATIONALISTS ON THE WEST BANK, IN TURN, CAN ONLY LEAD TO NEW PROBLEMS, DILEMMAS, AND FURTHER INTERNAL ISRAELI DEBATE. THE YEAR 1976 FOR ISRAEL IS ONE OF ELECTION PREPARATIONS, WITH PARTY ELECTIONS AND CONVENTIONS IN JUNE AND THE HAMMERING OUT OF A NEW LABOR ALIGNMENT PLATFORM IN THE FOLLOWING MONTHS. THESE DEVELOPMENTS MAY CAUSE THE FERMENT IN ISRAEL OVER BASIC ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUES AND THE CORRECTNESS OF ISRAEL'S APPROACH TO THEM TO BEGIN TO CRYSTALIZE.

8. IN ANY DISCUSSION OF THIS SUBJECT WITH THE SHAIKH, YOU COULD MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. WE REGARD THE ISRAELI FEBRUARY 22 PROPOSAL TO BE A SERIOUS ONE, AND WE INTEND TO RESUME OUR CONSULTATIONS WITH THE INTERESTED PARTIES, INTERRUPTED BECAUSE OF LEBANON, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

B. WE WOULD WELCOME THE UAE'S SUPPORT IN CONVINCING THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS INVOLVED THAT THE PROPOSAL IS NOT A STALLING TACTIC AND THAT AN ARAB FAILURE TO RESPOND POSITIVELY WILL BE INTERPRETED AS MEANING THAT ISRAEL HAS BEEN FORTHCOMING AND THE ARABS HAVE REACTED NEGATIVELY.

C. THE U.S. REMAINS DETERMINED TO SEE FURTHER PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN 1976 TOWARD AN ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE SETTLEMENT,
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REGARDLESS OF THE FACT THAT THIS IS A U.S. ELECTION YEAR.

D. THERE IS A GROWING DEBATE IN ISRAEL ABOUT FUNDAMENTAL ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUES AND ABOUT THE NEED FOR ISRAEL TO ADOPT A MORE CLEARCUT PEACE POLICY. THE ISRAELI POLITICAL PARTIES BEGIN PREPARATIONS IN 1976 FOR THE 1977 NATIONAL ELECTIONS, WHICH FACT WILL INTENSIFY THE DEBATE AND MAY SET THE STAGE FOR THE START OF SERIOUS MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS.

E. THE U.S. IS WATCHING THE EVOLUTION OF THE DEBATE IN ISRAEL CLOSELY AND WILL EXPLOIT EVERY OPENING FOR MAJOR NEGOTIATING PROGRESS. MEANTIME, WE COUNT ON OUR FRIENDS IN THE ARAB WORLD TO COUNSEL PATIENCE AND MODERATION ON THE ARAB SIDE AND NOT TO IMPEDE THE CHANCES FOR PROGRESS

BY SPELLING OUT PRECONDITIONS FOR NEGOTIATIONS. SISCO

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